

North Hill Managers in Violation of Contract

By SUSANNA SHEEHAN

North Hill golf course managers are in violation of their contract with the town because they have increased the price of coupon books against the terms of the contract, selectmen discovered this week. The board agreed to send a letter to the managers, Johnson Turf and Golf Inc., advising them of the violation and requesting a solution.

Old Cove resident Robert Doyle told selectmen six months ago that he had found a discrepancy between the contract and the price of coupon books, which allow golfers to buy tickets for reduced priced rounds of golf. According to town counsel Robert Troy,

Doyle was right and deserves credit for bringing it to the attention of the town. Under the contract, both membership fees and the price of coupon books and other fees are frozen for the first three years of the 10-year contract, which began in 1998. However, greens fees are not frozen. Because coupon books are essentially blocks of discounted greens fees, the managers felt they should be raised when the greens fees were increased, said North Hill Committee member Martin Desmery.

"I don't think he has any authority to legally raise coupon books," Troy told selectmen Monday night. "There's

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nothing to suggest they're allowed to raise coupon fees. It's an open and shut case...The town has done the right thing. The management has misunderstood the terms of the contract. It is strictly a matter of the management not following the contract."

To fully understand the agreement between Johnson Turf and Golf Inc., Troy said contract has to be read along with the request for proposals (RFP) that the town sent out before settling on a management company. "We're bound by the RFP," Troy said. It is referenced in places in the contract.

Troy recommended Town Manager Rocco Longo send a letter ordering Johnson Turf and Golf Inc. to immediately rescind the increase in coupon books. Troy also felt the man-

agers should refund money to golfers who overpaid for coupon books over the last year and a half. According to town Recreation Director Gordon Cushing, a total of \$29,000 has been generated by coupon book sale and other similar items. He did not know how many coupon books have been sold. He estimated the extra money owed to golfers to be \$1,000 to \$3,000.

Troy said it was up to the managers to figure out how to appease the golfers they overcharged because the town has been paid the full amount owed to it under the contract.

"This is a very small problem," said Troy. "They've got to be able to figure this out. The town of Duxbury doesn't need to figure this out."

Longo said that in addition to sending Johnson Turf and Golf a letter, he would call them and arrange a meeting.

Both selectmen and North Hill Advisory Committee members felt that this mistake should not be allowed to sour the good relationship between the town and the managers.

"I want to make sure we maintain a relationship with Johnson that is good for both parties," said selectmen chairman Margaret Kearney.

North Hill Advisory Committee member Michael Shuipis said: "I know we can take a strict line and come down hard on them, but I strongly urge that we not take a hard legal stand."

North Hill Advisory Committee member Martin Desmery said Johnson Turf and Golf Inc. has done much to improve the golf course over and above the terms of the contract and that he would hate to see this issue cause the course to suffer and "poison the rela-

tionship" between the town and Johnson.

Selectman John Tuffy did not feel that the price of coupon books should be rolled back immediately because he felt prices during a golf season should be consistent. However, he agreed that the relationship

with Johnson should not be jeopardized. "We have a stake in this, an interest that this remains a good, well-run course."

Doyle felt the town deserved more credit than Johnson in improving North Hill. He pointed out that the town made many improvements before the new 10-year contract began.